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Special Committee on decolonization GA/COL/2928
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SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON DECOLONIZATION CONTINUES CONSIDERATION OF SITUATION IN EAST TIMOR

In East Timor, arbitrary detention and torture were routine, and freedom of expression, association and assembly were nonexistent, a representative of Human Rights Watch Asia told the Special Committee on decolonization this afternoon as it continued its consideration of the question of East Timor.

She said the Indonesian Government deserved credit for allowing the recent visit to the Territory of the Commission on Human Rights Special Rapporteur on summary and arbitrary executions. However, in advance of high-profile visits of foreigners to East Timor, extensive security preparations were made by the Indonesian authorities, including the rounding up of potential "trouble makers".

A representative of the Revolutionary Front for the Independence of East Timor (FRETILIN) said that Governments of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) preferred to ignore the plight of East Timor. The FRETILIN was opposed to international arms sales to Indonesia and viewed with concern the sale of warships and warplanes to the Jakarta Government by European and American companies.

Also speaking before the Special Committee this afternoon were petitioners from the International League for Human Rights, the National Council of Maubere Resistance, the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization, the Catholic Institute for International Relations, National Assembly of Portugal, Timorese International Secretariat for Human Rights, the Timorese Liberation Organization and Solidarieta con Timor Est of Italy. Other petitioners were Maureen Tolfree, Francisco Xavier Amaral and a representative of United States Congresswoman Nita M. Lowey.

The Special Committee will meet at 10 a.m. tomorrow, 14 July, to continue its discussion of East Timor.

Committee Work Programme

The Special Committee on decolonization met this afternoon to continue hearing petitioners on the situation in East Timor. It was also expected to take up a consolidated report on 10 small Territories: American Samoa, Anguilla, Bermuda, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Guam, Montserrat, Tokelau, Turks and Caicos Islands, and the United States Virgin Islands.

(For details of a working paper on East Timor, see Press Release GA/COL/2927 issued today.)

Discussion on East Timor

JONATHAN BIRENBAUM, speaking on behalf of United States Congresswoman Nita M. Lowey, said the people of East Timor had never had the opportunity to elect their own officials or to determine their own future. Human rights abuses added to the problems there. The United States must help to enforce the self-determination clauses of the United Nations Charter, and it must take a strong and coherent stand against the Indonesian presence in East Timor.

The Indonesian Government had not seriously investigated allegations of human rights abuses or moved towards compliance with the 1993 recommendations of the Commission on Human Rights, he continued. Indonesia must be urged to open East Timor to investigators and journalists. It must be made clear to the Indonesian Government that the way to eliminate embarrassing criticism was not to suppress critics, but to reform treatment of the accused and of prisoners. The Indonesian Government must be pressured to act on the Commission's recommendations by such means as a complete cut-off of arms sales until it complied.

CHARLES NORCHI, of the International League for Human Rights, said fundamental human rights continued to be widely abused in East Timor. East Timor had changed directly from domination by the Portuguese to domination by the Indonesians. More than 5,000 troops of an Indonesian military presence spread fear in the Territory and abused individuals who were suspected of having pro-independence sentiments, even if they were expressed peacefully. For example, last month, three East Timorese had

been sentenced to 20 months in prison for shouting pro-independence slogans to foreign journalists. Furthermore, the Commission on Human Rights Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions had expressed his concern that the "perpetrators of human rights violations continued to enjoy impunity" in East Timor.

"Transmigration", the Indonesian resettlement policy whereby population was transferred from densely populated to sparsely populated parts of the archipelago, was changing the demographic face of East Timor. He cited reports that two ships per week arrived in Dili carrying Japanese settlers who were provided with backdated identity cards so that they could vote if a plebiscite on East Timor was held.

CONSTANCIO PINTO, of the National Council of Maubere Resistance, said that his organization believed in harmonious relations between East Timor and its neighbours in the south-east Asia region. The Council envisioned an independent republic of East Timor without a standing army with external security framed by a treaty of neutrality guaranteed by the Security Council. The new government would proclaim a general amnesty aimed at forgiving current enemies. Over 100,000 Indonesians had settled in East Timor; those willing to abide by East Timorese law would be welcome to stay.

The Council had put forward a three-phase peace plan which would begin with bilateral talks with Indonesia and Portugal under the auspices of the United Nations Secretary-General. A five-year transition to autonomy would allow East Timorese to govern themselves through their own institutions. A local assembly would be elected, with only East Timorese being allowed to vote and stand for office. A third phase would include preparation for a self-determination referendum in which the population could choose between free association, integration into Indonesia, or independence.

MAUREEN TOLFREE, another petitioner, said she was the sister of Brian Peters, one of five journalists murdered in Balido, East Timor, in 1975. While visiting Australia to investigate an incident, she had thought that she would go to Jakarta, where her brother's remains were. She had received a phone call from either the British or Australian Embassy informing her that they could not guarantee her safety in Jakarta and urged her to return to her home in the United Kingdom.

Apart from a statement by an Australian official and an account of an investigation which suggested that the five had died in mortar fire, she said she had heard nothing more about the cause of her brother's death. She found out a few months ago that journalists had tried to contact her and her father following the incident in Balido, but they had been told by the United Kingdom Foreign Office not to do so. She also found out that the Foreign Office was informed about the deaths of the five journalists within 24 hours of the incident. They had known officially from Australia's Defence Minister that the Indonesians had killed those men, but the Indonesian authorities had hidden the facts.

She called upon the people of East Timor to have an internationally supervised referendum on their future and urged Governments, including her own, to stop lying about East Timor. She demanded a properly conducted investigation into the deaths of the five journalists.

M.C. VAN WALT VAN PRAAG, of the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization, said that the right to self-determination of the people of East Timor had been recognized by the United Nations and was legally beyond question. The Secretary-General should meet with the Chairman of the National Council of Maubere Resistance, "Xanana" Gusmao, prior to the next round of talks on East Timor scheduled for January 1995. The East Timor peace plan presented by the Council to the political committee of the European Parliament in 1992 provided the best basis for a process that could lead to a just and lasting peace.

International access to East Timor for the United Nations and human rights and humanitarian organizations was still very limited, he said. His organization had twice asked for permission to visit the Territory, but had received no response.

SALLY K. LEVISON, of the Catholic Institute for International Relations, said that last autumn, Bishop Belo had written to a friend that East Timorese were living in an environment of terror. Indonesia was increasing the presence of its military units, creating an atmosphere of military occupation and dictatorship. The Catholic Institute was concerned for the safety of all East Timorese that rejected Indonesian rule, but especially for members of the Roman Catholic clergy. The Indonesian military regularly intervened in church affairs, harassed church-goers and discredited church personnel through disinformation.

ELISA MARIA RAMOS DAMIAO, a Member of Parliament of Portugal, said that, since 1975, Portugal, as the administering Power, had been prevented from assuming its responsibility towards East Timor. In 1992 and 1993 and 1994, consultations had been held under the auspices of the Secretary-General. However, nothing had changed for the people in East Timor. XVK+V.aXHW,.HK+5R4oncerned with improving its image on the world stage. Patterns of detention and human rights abuses continued in East Timor. In spite of efforts of the Secretary-General, violence and repression had not stopped. On behalf of the people of Portugal, she asked the Committee to act quickly on behalf of the people of East Timor.

LUIS MANUEL GERALDES, another Portuguese Member of Parliament, said the General Assembly in 1975 had recognized Portugal as the Power responsible for administering East Timor. Since that time, the fear, violence, repression, torture, disruption of family life and the attempts to destroy the Timorese culture had been the norm. The Indonesian Government knew that the current situation in East Timor could not be maintained indefinitely. The signs of nervousness shown by Indonesia during the recent Asian-Pacific Conference on East Timor in Manila was a clear indication of its uncertainty about the situation in East Timor.

Since 1992, the question of East Timor had reached a different level of discussion in the Human Rights Commission, he continued. However, serious violations of human rights continued in East Timor. Indonesia was a nation of two faces: one for international consumption; another for internal horror. The international community should adopt more drastic measures to stop the growing suffering in East Timor.

NARANA SINAI COISSORO, another Member of Parliament of Portugal, said the question of East Timor must be seen in the context of the inability of the international community to enforce respect for human rights and the right of people to self-determination. It was intolerable when great Powers abuse their strengths to serve their own interests. A great military Power had invaded and occupied East Timor, killing hundreds of thousands of East Timorese -- a crime of genocide which should be judged by an international tribunal. It was unacceptable that nations such as Australia and the United States allowed such events in the Pacific, while they claimed to be extremely worried about Africa and the former Yugoslavia. He appealed to those nations to place respect for international law and fundamental morality above their own interest.

MIGUEL URBANO RODRIGUES, also a Member of Parliament of Portugal, said that Indonesia was carrying out policies which made it an outlaw State. Indonesia has repeatedly promised reforms which had not taken place. Reports of Amnesty International and visiting parliamentarians had described extrajudicial executions and other violations.

Without the support of major industrialized Powers, Indonesia would not be able to carry out its policies of intransigence in East Timor, he said. The European Commission had actually named the Indonesian Foreign Minister as a human rights leader. The support of the Government of the United States was the most immoral of all. The State Department report on Indonesia in 1994 had stressed that the country's economy showed great dynamism, but that the Government was characterized by oppression, arbitrary detention and torture. The State Department was aware of what was taking place in East Timor, but had come to regard the annexation of East Timor as a fait accompli. American author Noam Chomsky had recalled that United States President Ford and Secretary of State Kissinger, in 1975, had given the "green light" to the Indonesian invasion.

Another petitioner, FRANCISCO XAVIER AMARAL, said he was the founder of the Revolutionary Front for the Independence of East Timor (FRETILIN) and had served as the first President of the Democratic Republic of East Timor. Reviewing the history of East Timor prior to 1975, he said that East Timor had endured a cruel colonial experience when the Portuguese occupied East Timor. It was Portugal that had, in 1975, left East Timor in a state of civil war, and it was Portugal that had not wanted the United Nations involved in East Timor after proclaiming it to be an overseas province.

Today in East Timor, there were people that held out false hopes and unfounded dreams to the youth of East Timor, he said. It was untrue that East Timor was a closed territory, since it was open to serious, fair-minded visitors and professional human rights organization. The false hopes and dreams held out to young people there had dire consequences. Having analysed all the pros and cons of the future of East Timor, he said he continued to accept Indonesian citizenship and the connection of East Timor to other provinces of Indonesia. The East Timorese belonged to the same ethnic group as those living in West Timor, a part of Indonesia since 1945. Indonesia's concern with East Timor had brought development, the hope of stability

and an end to 450 years of occupation. He appealed to the people of East Timor to stop listening to the promises and empty dreams given by politicians and their international friends.

PAULINO GAMA, of the Timorese International Secretariat for Human Rights, said that after the Santa Cruz incident of 12 November 1991, his organization had denounced the behaviour of the Indonesian military. After investigating, they had concluded that the incident had only been an isolated action of certain individuals motivated by Portugese interference. Indonesian authorities were observing the recommendations of the Human Rights Commission, not only in East Timor, but in all Indonesia.

SIDNEY JONES, Human Rights Watch Asia, said that East Timor was a place where arbitrary detention and torture were routine and where basic freedoms of expression, association and assembly were nonexistent. The Indonesian Government had taken steps for which it deserved credit, such as the recent visit to the area by the Human Rights Commission's Special Rapporteur on summary and arbitrary executions. But extensive security preparations are taken by the Indonesian authorities in advance of high-profile visits of foreigners to East Timor, including the rounding up of potential "trouble makers".

From 12 to 15 April, 26 foreign journalists were taken on an official visit to East Timor at the invitation of the Indonesian Government. One day prior to their departure, a small group of East Timorese held a pro-independence demonstration in front of their hotel. Those demonstrators were arrested and tried for having taken part in an "illegal meeting".

JOSE MARTINS, of the Timorese Liberation Organization, asked how the United Nations could harmonize the positions of Portugal and Indonesia if East Timorese political leaders did not face each other without external interference. Indonesia was the "ancestral tree" from which East Timorese were descended. Timor had been arbitrarily divided between Portugal and the Netherlands during the colonial period. East Timor had been abandoned at precisely the moment that the Timorese were engaged in a civil war. Because of Portugese imperialism, Timorese had been forced to choose between a new protecting Power, Indonesia, and self-extermination.

In 1975, Portugal had requested Indonesia to establish peace and order in East Timor. Today, Timorese had to decide whether they should continue to provoke and offend Indonesia, its "saviour from chaos and disorder". East Timor today was already independent -- through its decision to ask Indonesia to preserve it from new forms of colonialism. East Timor was only a problem for those stubborn groups who wanted to restore socialism, and the dictatorship of the party over the workers.

JOHN M. MILLER, of Solidarieta con Timor Est of Italy, said the situations that had occurred in Namibia, Belize and Western Sahara were similar to that of East Timor. He was gravely concerned at the difficulties regarding access to East Timor experienced by human rights organizations and at the pressure exerted by the Indonesian Government on the Philippine Government in order not to allow the holding of the international meeting of solidarity groups in Manila in May. Bearing in mind the continuous human rights violations in East Timor, he requested that the United Nations guarantee the right of the people of East Timor to self-determination with processes similar to those adopted for Namibia, Western Sahara and Belize.

JOSE LUIS GUTIERRES, representative of FRETILIN, said that his organization had appealed many times to the countries of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), but those Governments preferred to ignore the plight of East Timor. This year, the Timorese struggle had received a positive reference in several international forums; the major success of the year had been the Asia and Pacific Conference on East Timor in Manila. The recent establishment of the Joint Committee on East Timor, in Jakarta, also represented a turning point in the struggle.

East Timor was a resource-rich country with large oil and gas reserves in the Timor Sea, between East Timor and Australia. That reserve had attracted multinational corporations from around the world. The Timor Gap Treaty, for joint exploration between Indonesia and Australia, had been challenged by Portugal, the administering Power of East Timor, in the World Court. While not opposed to the operation of multinationals in East Timor, FRETILIN did not support their activities in the Timor Sea at this stage.

Indonesia had created companies and employment in East Timor, but those companies belonged to Indonesian generals, and the jobs had been primarily given to Indonesian immigrants. The FRETILIN was opposed to international arms sales to Indonesia and viewed with concern the sale of warships and warplanes to the Jakarta Government by European and American companies.

DOMINGOS AUGUSTO FERREIRA (Sao Tome and Principe), speaking also on behalf of Angola, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique, said the situation in East Timor remained unchanged. Indonesia did not want to allow those people to express their right to self-determination. He expressed concern about continued human rights violation in East Timor. The talks between Indonesia and Portugal, under the auspices of the Secretary-General, should continue. He hoped that one day those talks would lead to a situation where the people of East Timor would have control over their own future.